

STAFF SERVICE RECORD

NAME	COOMBES, COLIN EDWARD		
WHERE EMPLOYED	BRISBANE		
DATE JOINED	17/4/36.	DATE LEFT	8.1.38.
REMARKS	Fourth Boy Accounts Dept. Salary - £31/4/- p.a. Resigned to join another Co. - Record, good. ATTACHED IS CUTTING FROM SYDNEY MORNING HERALD 25/1/41.		

# COMMUNICATIONS WITH GERMANY.

## Munition Clerk's Career.

### CENSORED LETTERS IN BRISBANE.

Evidence that a young man who had been employed in Brisbane as a censor of letters in German, and later in Sydney, as a clerk in the Ministry of Munitions, had been in communication with a German publishing firm in Bremen, was given in the Central Police Court yesterday.

It was stated that he was born in Queensland and could neither speak nor write German.

Colin Edward Coombes, 19, was charged before Mr. McCulloch, S.M., with the theft of 36 receipts belonging to the Ministry of Munitions.

Detective McDermott said in evidence that when he searched Coombes's room at Bridge Road, Forest Lodge, he found 36 receipts of the Ministry of Munitions in a suitcase. The receipts represented thousands of pounds.

In reply to questions, Detective McDermott added, Coombes said he had taken the documents home to destroy them.

Coombes in evidence said he had considered he was entitled to the receipts. They were in his possession for filing, and he considered they were of no value apart from auditing purposes. He had no motive in stealing the receipts.

Replying to Mr. McCulloch, Detective McDermott said the police searched Coombes's room because they had been told something, and expected to find subversive propaganda on behalf of an enemy country.

Coombes was born in Toowoomba (Queensland), Detective McDermott added. He had worked as a clerk in Burns, Philp's, and as an analytical chemist for the Shell Oil Co. He was employed later on laboratory work by the Meat Industries Board, and wrote a thesis on meat.

While at the Brisbane University, Coombes gained a smattering of German, and obtained a job in the Censor's Office, in Brisbane, censoring letters in German. Coombes was discharged because of certain happenings in that office.

Coombes came to Sydney last November, Detective McDermott added, and one of his first applications for work was to the Ministry of Munitions. In his application he claimed that he could speak German, Dutch, and Italian.

Detective McDermott said he had been told that Coombes could not speak German, neither could he write a word. He had told Mr. Byrnes, Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions, that he had just completed a five years' medical course at the Brisbane University.

### GRAVE SUSPICION.

Mr. McCulloch, S.M.: What were you searching for? I don't want to know if it is against public interest not to disclose it?

Detective McDermott: In the papers found in the room were several which gave rise to grave suspicion in our minds. One showed that the defendant was communicating with a German publishing firm in Bremen.

A translation of these letters, which were in German, was handed to the Bench, but was not made public.

After reading these documents, Mr. McCulloch turned to the defendant and said: "What are you lacking in—in principle or perspective?"

Coombes: In money.

In sentencing Coombes to three months' imprisonment with hard labour, Mr. McCulloch said that so far as the evidence enabled him to judge Coombes removed the documents for the purpose of destroying them, simply because he was too lazy to do the job he was supposed to do. By the destruction of these documents he might have caused the Ministry of Munitions considerable loss of time, and placed other employees under suspicion.